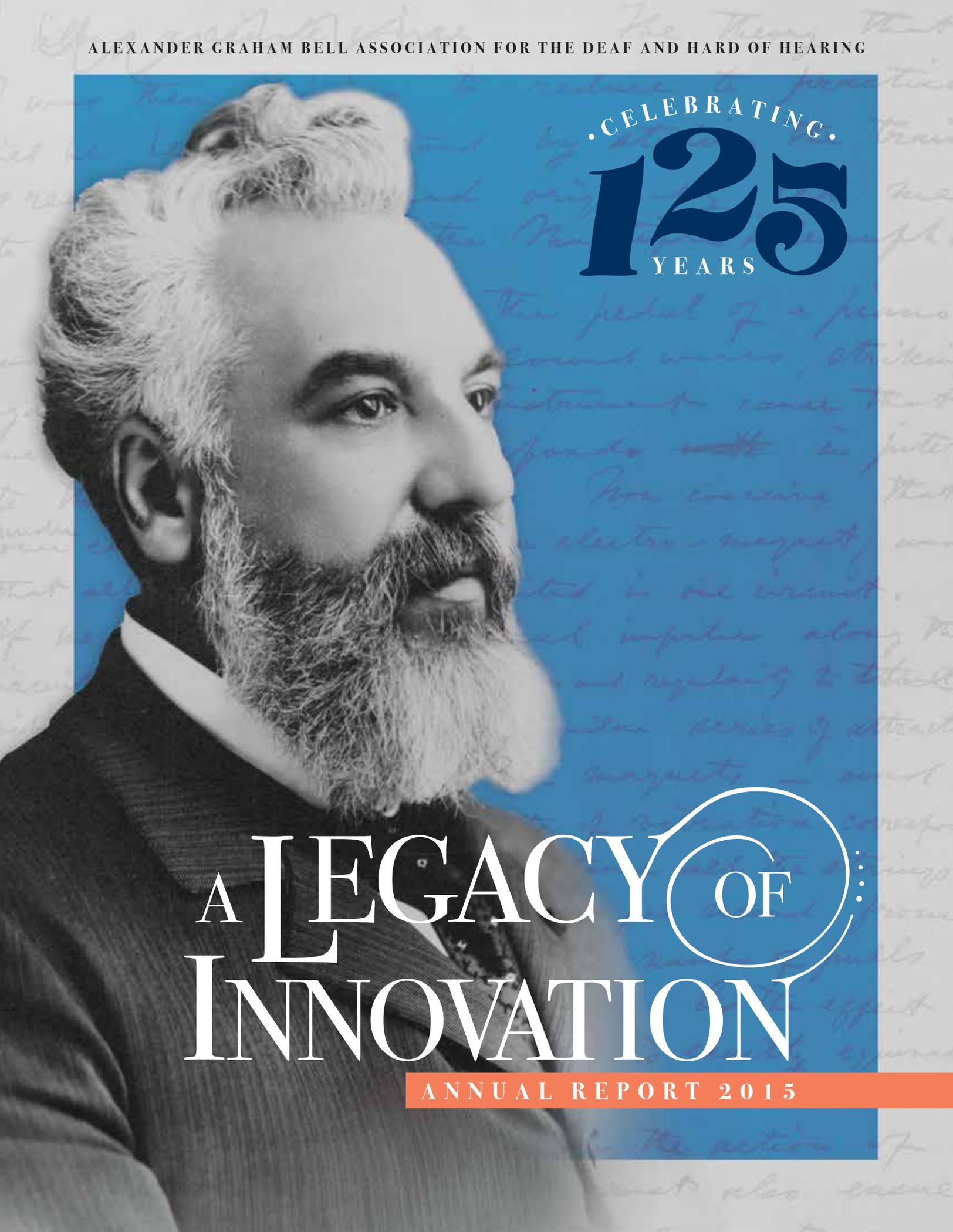


CELEBRATING

125  
YEARS

A black and white portrait of Alexander Graham Bell, shown from the chest up, facing right. He has a full, white beard and mustache, and is wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt and a dark tie. The background of the portrait is a solid blue color. The overall background of the page is a light gray with faint, handwritten text in a cursive script.

A LEGACY OF  
INNOVATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

against the strings of  
one to resound which

FOR OVER 125 YEARS, THE ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL ASSOCIATION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING (AG BELL) HAS BEEN **CHANGING LIVES BY HELPING CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING LEARN TO LISTEN AND SPEAK.**



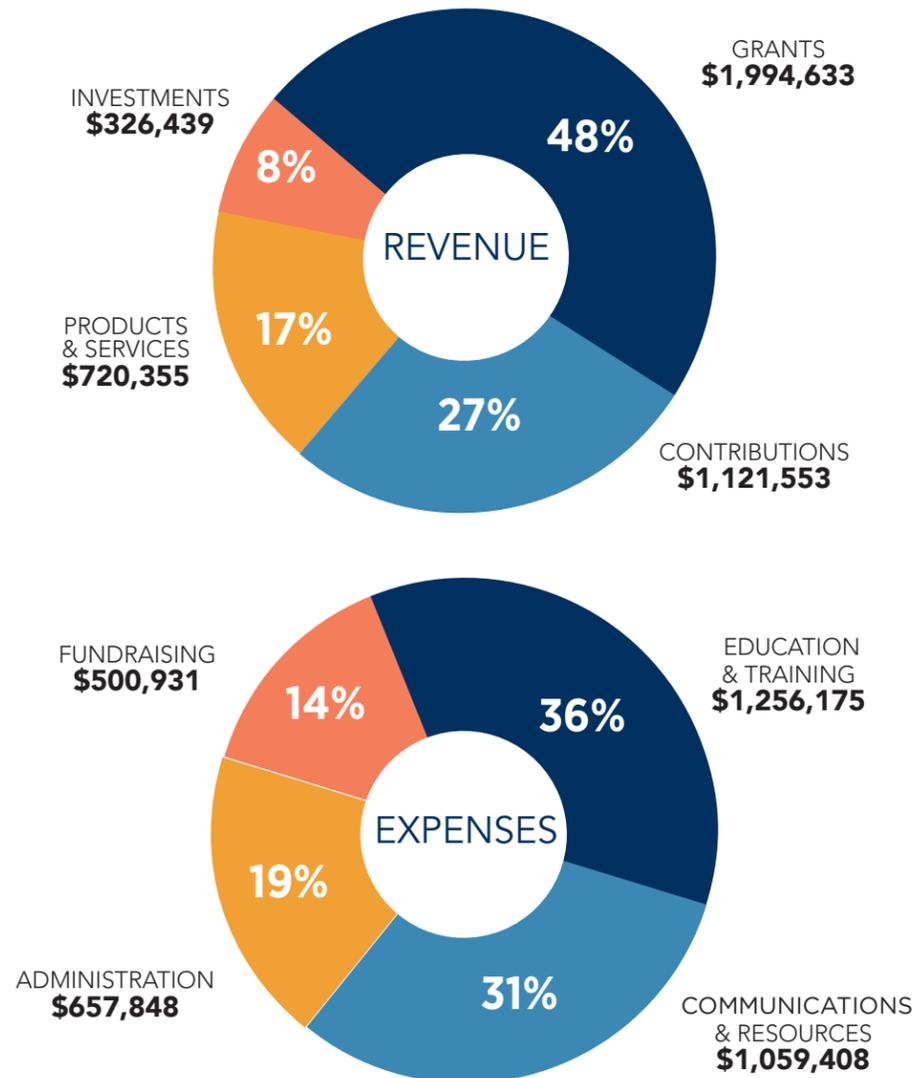
Mother and son pose for a photo in between AG Bell Convention activities.

**S**purred by innovations first conceived by Dr. Alexander Graham Bell to help deaf people hear – including the telephone and audiometer – advances in technology make it possible for people with hearing loss to listen to even the softest of sounds. Coupled with therapy to understand sound and language, this makes it possible for nearly every child born deaf to listen, speak, read and thrive!

You make it possible for lives to be changed. You open up the future to every opportunity for children who are deaf through your support of AG Bell. We are deeply grateful – and so are the millions of parents, children and professionals around the world whom you have helped.

Please know that your gifts are well stewarded and focused on helping families and children with the gift of sound and language.

### HERE'S HOW WE USED YOUR GIFTS IN 2015



## WHAT IS LISTENING AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE?

**J**ust a few generations ago, it was not possible for people who were deaf to hear. With new and proven advances, hearing aids and cochlear implants can help nearly every child born with hearing loss to enjoy the miracle of sound. But hearing isn't enough; children need to learn to recognize the sounds they hear and to replicate speech and language. This is natural for children with typical hearing who begin to hear in the womb. For children with hearing loss, it takes a dedicated therapist working closely with the child's first teachers – his or her parents – to develop the ability to speak and listen.

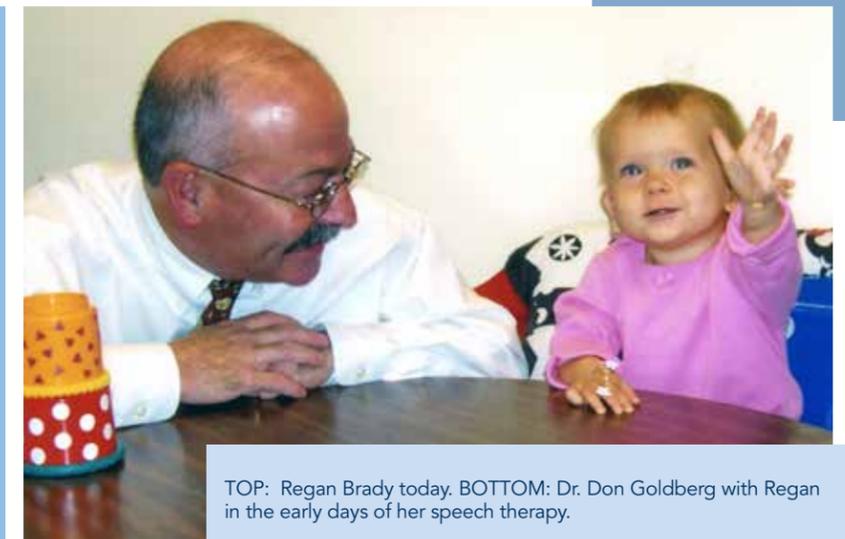
Don Goldberg, Ph.D., is one of those dedicated therapists. As a professor at The College of Wooster, Don trains and inspires speech-language pathologists to use research-based methods and to find joy in helping a deaf child learn to talk. Working with the Cleveland Clinic, Don has served hundreds of children over the years, and he knows exactly where they are on their journey to independence.

Don worked with Regan Brady and her family throughout her early years. At the age of 11, Regan wrote about her experiences with cochlear implants in stories that were eventually published as a book, *Listening to the Waves*. She wrote it so that parents and teachers of deaf children might learn from her experience. Most recently, Regan was one of three students to win the first Coolidge Scholarship, a merit award that will cover her tuition, room and board for four years of undergraduate study at any university in the nation. Regan had to demonstrate a keen interest in public policy, an appreciation for the values championed by President Coolidge particularly in public service, humility and leadership potential.

Regan enjoys the thrill of competition. While in high school, she was a member of the varsity lacrosse, cross country and debate teams. Regan competed in the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, DC, where she and her father raised over \$18,000 for the Semper Fi Fund. The spirit of philanthropy is at the core of her family's values.

Regan has spent her summers working in a Science Research Program at a nearby university in Ohio, and has served as a mentor for fellow Advanced Bionics cochlear implant candidates and recipients, reaching out to local children who are deaf and hard of hearing. With the Coolidge award, she is set to achieve her educational dreams and is an inspiration to others who will follow her.

AG Bell applauds Regan's achievements and recognizes that the commitment of her family to listening and spoken language helped Regan in all her accomplishments. With the help and guidance of outstanding professionals in education and speech therapy, like Don Goldberg, children who are deaf can learn to listen and speak just like Regan.



TOP: Regan Brady today. BOTTOM: Dr. Don Goldberg with Regan in the early days of her speech therapy.

**AG BELL** is committed to ensuring that every family can engage with talented, dedicated and qualified professionals who will help their child acquire language and literacy that will serve them their entire life.

# MAKE YOUR GIFTS COUNT



TOP: Meet Cole Alholm, a 6-year-old budding philanthropist. LEFT: Because of your support, Kylie Patch is learning to sing, act, dance and to gymnastics.

The gifts of hearing and speech should be available to everyone, but there are obstacles that many families have to overcome along their path to listening and spoken language. Some of those obstacles are financial challenges. Because of the support of generous donors, AG Bell can offer help to families from birth through college. Here are a few ways donors make a difference in children's lives:

Cole Alholm is a healthy, thriving 6-year-old who has already learned the lesson of doing good for others. Identified as deaf in his first weeks of life, Cole received bilateral cochlear implants before his first birthday, and they opened up the world of sound for him. But it hasn't been easy for his parents, Brooke and Dan. Through battles with insurance companies and the search for excellent teachers to help Cole catch up with his peers, they have remained "warriors," focused on their son's success. When it came time to upgrade Cole's "ears," they turned to AG Bell for help with out-of-pocket expenses, and your gifts made Cole's upgrade possible.

The Alholms don't miss a chance to teach their children the joy of giving. Cole's sister and her friends manned a lemonade stand and sent their earnings to AG Bell to help other children with

hearing loss. At the family's annual Kentucky Derby Party, friends and family contribute to a gift that the family sends to AG Bell. Brooke says, "Thanks to you and AG Bell for all you do. It truly changes lives."

Help comes in more forms than equipment or therapy. We all know that children learn in different ways and that hands-on experiences in the arts and sciences improve literacy and learning. For a child with hearing loss, these opportunities can have a momentous impact. Now age 10, Kylie Patch received her cochlear implants at ages 2 and 4, and has been making use of the gift of sound in many ways. In 2015, her mom, Daphne, sent AG Bell a video she and Kylie put together that included scenes of her performing in a choir, a theater group, a hip hop dance troupe, and a gymnastics class. She even competed in her school's talent show! Kylie's teacher describes her as witty, full of personality and willing to take on any challenge. When friends told Kylie she was singing off-key, she asked her mom for singing lessons, and AG Bell made that possible for her. Kylie's lessons have helped improve her tone, pitch and pronunciation, and Kylie's peers see her as someone they can relate to, not as someone with a hearing loss. Her self-esteem is soaring!

In 2015, something special happened at AG Bell. We received a call from the father of a teenager who is deaf and whose cochlear implants have made it possible for him to learn music. Caleb Dillehay is an accomplished pianist, and his father, Chuck, wanted to establish a fund to help other children with hearing loss learn to play music. Chuck invested his own funds and used donations collected from health care specialists who attended his company's professional development conferences to launch the Turn It Up Fund, a donor-advised fund managed for him by AG Bell. At each conference, Chuck and his family share their story and attendees contribute to the Turn It Up Fund. In 2016, the fund made its first gifts to two budding musicians studying the violin and the guitar. We look forward to telling you more about their progress in the coming months.

**“ THANKS to you and AG Bell for all you do. It truly changes lives.”**

**– BROOKE ALHOLM**

# EDUCATION OPENS DOORS TO OPPORTUNITY

Each year, AG Bell has the honor of awarding \$100,000 in scholarships to highly accomplished students to help them pursue their college education. In the process, we review applications from well over 100 outstanding students who are destined to achieve remarkable things – their letters of recommendation tell of great accomplishments not only academically, but also in their communities as leaders, advocates, fundraisers, athletes and artists. We've watched our scholars go on to remarkable careers – like Dr. Nancy Barker, the first deaf person in the world to earn a Ph.D. in zoology, who is working to preserve species in Africa – or Dr. J. Tilak Ratnanather, who leads research in neuroimaging at Johns Hopkins University and mentors students who are deaf, earning him a Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring.

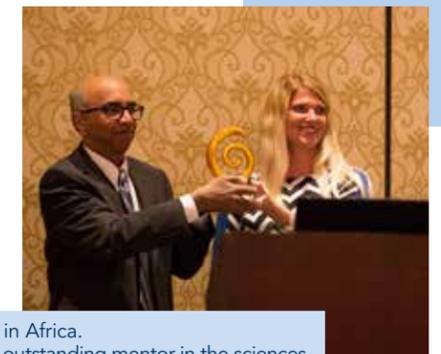
All of the scholarships at AG Bell are possible because outstanding volunteers and supporters who yearned to leave a legacy believed in the future and wanted to help young adults achieve their dreams. Through endowments and trust funds – some established as long ago as the 1940s – their gifts continue to make high-quality education a reality for hundreds of young people.

Like Matthew Browne, Matt is an application engineer for Sensus, a company focused on helping utility companies, cities and other large organizations do more to improve efficiency, increase safety and conserve resources. Matt received his AG Bell scholarship in 2000 to support his B.S. in biomedical engineering from the University of California, San Diego. From there, Matt went on to earn his MBA from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. Matt didn't simply benefit from AG Bell's Scholarship Program; he has also chosen to give back, serving in past years as a counselor with the Leadership Opportunities for Teens (LOFT) program and on the scholarship



selection committee, contributing his best thoughts and energies to helping our students succeed.

At AG Bell, we are grateful not only for the forethought of supporters who invested in the future of students who are deaf, but also for the investment of time so many volunteers have made to help us identify and support great scholars.



TOP: Dr. Nancy Barker tagging a wild hyena in Africa. BOTTOM: Dr. J. Tilak Ratnanather honored as outstanding mentor in the sciences.

*will resound. In the one instance all the strings receive a definite number of pushes per second from*

# BUILDING TOMORROW'S LEADERS

Thanks to your support, AG Bell has been hosting the Leadership Opportunities for Teens (LOFT) program for high school students with hearing loss since 1996. Each year, LOFT welcomes 40 teenagers to a summer overnight program filled with activities to build their skills in leadership, self-advocacy, teamwork and service to others. These are lasting lessons that serve our teens well into adulthood and serve as a foundation for their whole life.

LOFT benefits from the support of committed sponsors and individuals. Key to its success has been the very generous matching gift provided by the Children's Hearing Foundation in Taiwan, which LOFT has received every year since the founder's daughter attended

the program. Wonderful volunteers have made LOFT an outstanding program, committing their energy as role models and presenters who share very valuable life experiences with our students.

Like James Barden. James participated in LOFT as a student in 2004, where he found that others were feeling the same things he did about school and friendships. "Most importantly," he said, "I had new friends that I could talk to and rely on for support. I was better able to advocate for myself with the knowledge that new friends across the country were doing the same." In the years since, James earned a degree in Political Science from the University of Massachusetts, worked as a Public Affairs Assistant in

Boston, developed programs serving the homeless in Manhattan and served countless community services organizations as a volunteer, and through AmeriCorps, James is currently earning a master's degree in government at Harvard. He has also found time to serve as a counselor at LOFT for the past two years.

"I think it's critical for teens with hearing loss to know that they're not alone. Whether you connect through AG Bell or other social networking, there are organizations that can and will support you," James advises.

AG Bell is grateful for the service of adult role models like James and for the continuing support of generous sponsors and friends.



2015 Session 1 LOFTees pose for a photo in front of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool and Washington Monument in Washington, D.C.

**“AFTER LOFT, it was clear to see how much our daughter had learned and changed. I would recommend this program to any teen who might need help 'coming out of their shell.' Keep doing what you're doing! LOFT is wonderful!”**

–2015 LOFT Parent

**“THANK YOU to all the people at AG Bell and those who contributed to the LOFT program. I will never forget a moment of it. It definitely will influence the rest of my life.”**

–2015 LOFT Participant

# SPEAKING UP FOR OTHERS

**“IT WAS a very enlightening and life-changing experience. I gained a lot of confidence and began to look at my disability in a different light. I really feel like I can now conquer the world and whatever life throws my way.”**

– LOFT Teen Participant



Nick Stone, 2010 LOFT participant and 2015 counselor, speaks to LOFT teens about advocacy.

Growing up with hearing loss, Nick Stone often wondered if this would prevent him from achieving his dreams. Today, Nick is an optimistic and successful 21-year-old law student who is ready to change the world. His vision and values for building a better world are founded on his own experiences of navigating challenging situations and finding positive results.

Nick was born with Large Vestibular Aqueduct Syndrome (LVAS) and was first diagnosed with progressive, bilateral hearing loss at age 4 when a head injury caused a significant amount of hearing

loss. Nick credits technology, community and education for enabling him to self-advocate and navigate life successfully. He is grateful for the support of family, friends, neighbors, teachers, professors, coaches, and AG Bell as well as people who are deaf and hard of hearing. For Nick, his family has played the most important role in supporting him so that he received the attention he needed as a young child like speech-language therapy, hearing aids and educational support and accommodations.

It was his mother who found out about AG Bell's Leadership Opportunities for

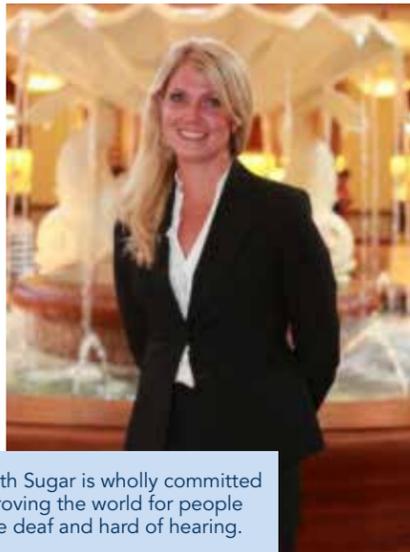
Teens (LOFT) program and encouraged him to apply. Attending LOFT in high school was a turning point for Nick in how he viewed his hearing loss. Before LOFT, Nick might have been apologetic if he wasn't able to understand what someone said and had to ask people to repeat themselves. However, once he attended LOFT, he became proud of his ability to work with his hearing loss and recognized the importance of advocating for his own needs. He became self-confident in asking for clarification when he didn't understand. Because of that openness, he came to know people better and better understood the ideas they were sharing. It was not until attending LOFT that Nick started using an FM system to gain access to all that was happening in the classroom. The results were astounding. LOFT taught him to make use of accommodations that are available to him.

While at Tulane University, Nick had the chance to study abroad in Cuba. He needed to take difficult classes in Spanish such as Bioethics, and his FM system would be necessary. He had to meet with all of his professors at the University of Havana to assure them that his FM system was not a secret recording device. Using the Spanish translations available on the AG Bell website, Nick educated his professors on the use of FM systems and made it clear that his academic success was dependent upon it.

A true advocate, Nick is entering his second year at Boston University law school and preparing to change the world. He gives back to AG Bell by serving as a LOFT counselor, helping teens by sharing his real-life experiences. With your support, AG Bell continues to provide students like Nick with programs and resources that support positive change and create bridges between cultures.

*If we pass a series of electrical impulses along the circuit — (corresponding in number and regularity to the vibrations of a sound) — a similar series of attractive*

# HOW WILL YOU BE REMEMBERED?



Meredith Sugar is wholly committed to improving the world for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

talk with the help of technology and support, as part of a purposeful journey a family chooses to make. She sought to dispel long-standing misconceptions about people who are deaf and hard of hearing, and gave a voice to our children, families and professionals alike. Meredith will continue to represent all parents of a child who is deaf and joins an illustrious group of men and women who have served AG Bell through extraordinary commitment and leadership.

Legacies are also made by donors like Anne T. Gurecki. Anne's daughter was born deaf at a time when cochlear implants were just a dream. The Gureckis made a lifelong commitment to listening and spoken language, and when Anne passed away in 2014, that commitment included the transfer of her estate to AG Bell. Today, her support sustains the education of families and individuals focused on listening and spoken language.

**HOWEVER** you desire to leave your legacy, AG Bell would be happy to help you plan a gift that will keep on giving for generations to come.

Legacies can take many forms. At AG Bell, we have been honored by legacies built through time, talent and treasure. Take the legacy of Meredith Sugar, Esq., AG Bell President from 2014 to 2016.

Meredith joined the board in 2009 with a personal goal of making the world a much better and more manageable place for people with hearing loss, like her son Jonah. She calls her family's "unexpected journey" a gift, and this inspired her to lead the AG Bell Board as president. Throughout her term, Meredith showed us that it takes a collaborative effort to make an organization like AG Bell a success and, by all measures, the association has improved immensely during Meredith's tenure. She demonstrated infinite compassion as a mentor, parent, advocate and much more.

Some of her accomplishments include guiding the organization through the implementation of a strategic plan; advocating publicly on behalf of children who have hearing loss and their families; and most importantly, helping other parents understand that a baby born with hearing loss can learn to hear and



Meredith with her son, Jonah, whose deafness motivated his entire family to find opportunities for Jonah to listen and speak.

# HOW CAN YOU CHANGE THE FUTURE?

As we celebrate our 125th anniversary, we are reminded of the importance of engaging people in the effort to transform lives and create a brighter future for all. Your investment in the values, vision and mission of AG Bell deepens the reach of our work. Because of friends like you, more than 400 families and college-bound young adults received direct support and more than two million people found the information they need to help children learn to listen and speak. Because of you, they are learning to read and excel in their studies, play music, participate in sports and theater groups, dance and sing, and achieve their goals of a college education and gainful employment.

We couldn't do it without you!

AG Bell wishes to thank the employees of Marcum LLP in the New England region for their generous support. The Marcum Foundation is a national charitable organization based in South Florida that supports nonprofit organizations providing critical assistance at the community level. Beneficiaries are nominated by employees of Marcum LLP, a top national accounting and advisory services firm.

In 2015, employees of their New England region selected AG Bell as a recipient of their support. We spoke with Michael Broder, Marcum Foundation's Partner-in-Charge, to find out why the Marcum Group supports employee giving and how they encourage this vital aspect of corporate social responsibility.

Marcum raises funds through events, collection drives, volunteer initiatives and an employee planned giving program. Michael told us that "corporate responsibility offers benefits to many employees such as an increase in creativity, positive workplace environment, individual philanthropy and personal growth. Employee giving programs empower staff to participate in good works in the communities where they live and work. Programs like Marcum's, which match employee gifts 1:1, show a true commitment to making a difference for people in need."

Marcum involves employees in philanthropy by supporting volunteer time with local charities, and organizing corporate team events like road races and walkathons, collection drives of items to donate like school supplies and food, and a special Jeans Day when employees make a contribution and are permitted to "dress down" on the last Friday of the month. Michael said it is "an effortless way to raise extra funding for local nonprofits."

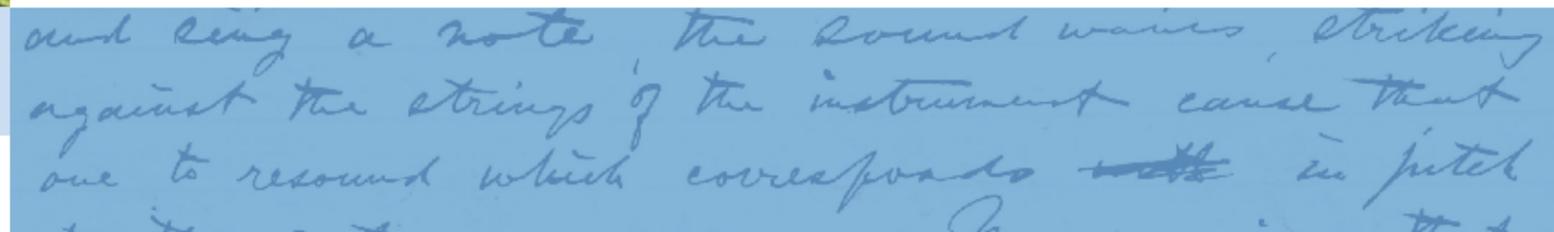
His advice to companies hoping to establish an employee giving program: Start small and develop momentum with your teams to start making an impact. Nothing is too small, and every dollar or hour donated to help a local charity counts.

The support of the Marcum Foundation and other corporations truly makes a difference!

For more information on employee matching programs, corporate sponsorship, legacy gifts or grant-supported services at AG Bell, please contact Lisa Chutjian, Chief Development Officer, at [lchutjian@agbell.org](mailto:lchutjian@agbell.org) or 202-204-4678.



Michael Broder, Partner-in-Charge. Marcum LLP empowers its employees to make a difference where they live



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Mateo Avril and his parents meet with CEO  
Emilio Alonso-Mendoza at the Volta Bureau.



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*Alexander Graham Bell*

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